

Foreword

Groundwater is one of California's greatest natural resources. In an average year, groundwater meets about 30 percent of California's urban and agricultural water demands. In drought years, this percentage increases to more than 40 percent. In 1995, an estimated 13 million Californians, nearly 43 percent of the State's population, were served by groundwater. The demand on groundwater will increase significantly as California's population grows to a projected 46 million by the year 2020. In many basins, our ability to optimally use groundwater is affected by overdraft and water quality impacts, or limited by a lack of data, management, and coordination between agencies.

Over the last few years, California voters and the Legislature have provided significant funding to local agencies for conjunctive use projects, groundwater recharge facilities, groundwater monitoring, and groundwater basin management activities under Proposition 13 and the Local Groundwater Management Assistance Act of 2000. Most recently, the 2002 passage of Proposition 50 will result in additional resources to continue recent progress toward sustaining our groundwater resources through local agency efforts. We are beginning to see significant benefits from these investments.

The State Legislature recognizes the need for groundwater data in making sound local management decisions. In 1999, the Legislature approved funding and directed the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to update the inventory of groundwater basins contained in Bulletin 118 (1975), *California's Ground Water* and Bulletin 118-80 (1980), *Ground Water Basins in California*. In 2001, the Legislature passed AB 599, requiring the State Water Resources Control Board to establish a comprehensive monitoring program to assess groundwater quality in each groundwater basin in the State and to increase coordination among agencies that collect groundwater contamination information. In 2002, the Legislature passed SB 1938, which contains new requirements for local agency groundwater management plans to be eligible for public funds for groundwater projects.

Effective management of groundwater basins is essential because groundwater will play a key role in meeting California's water needs. DWR is committed to assisting local agencies statewide in developing and implementing effective, locally planned and controlled groundwater management programs. DWR is also committed to federal and State interagency efforts and to partnerships with local agencies to coordinate and expand data monitoring activities that will provide necessary information for more effective groundwater management. Coordinated data collection at all levels of government and local planning and management will help to ensure that groundwater continues to serve the needs of Californians.



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Introduction

Groundwater is one of California's greatest natural resources. In an average water supply year, groundwater meets about 30 percent of California's urban and agricultural demand. In drought years, this percentage increases to 40 percent or even higher (DWR 1998). Some cities, such as Fresno, Davis, and Lodi, rely solely on groundwater for their drinking water supply. In 1995, an estimated 13 million Californians (nearly 43 percent of the State's population) used groundwater for at least a portion of their public supply needs (Solley and others 1998). With a projected population of nearly 46 million by the year 2020, California's demand on groundwater will increase significantly. In many basins, our ability to optimally use groundwater is affected by overdraft and water quality, or limited by a lack of data, lack of management, and coordination between agencies.

In the last few years, California has provided substantial funds to local agencies for groundwater management. For example, the nearly \$2 billion Water Bond 2000 (Proposition 13) approved by California voters in March 2000 specifically authorizes funds for two groundwater programs: \$200 million for grants for feasibility studies, project design, and the construction of conjunctive use facilities; and \$30 million for loans for local agency acquisition and construction of groundwater recharge facilities and grants for feasibility studies for recharge projects. Additionally, the Local Groundwater Management Assistance Act of 2000 (AB 303) resulted in \$15 million in fiscal years 2001, 2002, and 2003 for groundwater studies and data collection intended to improve basin and subbasin groundwater management. These projects focus on improving groundwater monitoring, coordinating groundwater basin management, and conducting groundwater studies.

The State Legislature has increasingly recognized the importance of groundwater and the need for monitoring in making sound groundwater management decisions. Significant legislation was passed in 2000, 2001 and 2002. AB 303 authorizes grants to help local agencies develop better groundwater management strategies. AB 599 (2001) requires, for the first time, that the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), in cooperation with other agencies, develop a comprehensive monitoring program capable of assessing groundwater quality in every basin in the State with the intent of maintaining a safe groundwater supply. SB 610 (2001) and SB 901 (2001) together require urban water suppliers, in their urban water management plans, to determine the adequacy of current and future supplies to meet demands. Detailed groundwater information is required for those suppliers that use groundwater. SB 221 (2001) prohibits approval of certain developments without verification of an available water supply. These bills are significant with respect to groundwater because much of California's new development will rely on groundwater for its supply.

Finally, SB 1938 (2002) was enacted to provide incentives to local agencies for improved groundwater management. The legislation modified the Water Code to require that specific elements be included in a groundwater management plan for an agency to be eligible for certain State funding administered by the Department of Water Resources for groundwater projects. AB 303 is exempt from that requirement.

History of Bulletin 118

DWR has long recognized the need for collection, summary, and evaluation of groundwater data as tools in planning optimal use of the groundwater resource. An example of this is DWR's Bulletin 118 series. Bulletin 118 presents the results of groundwater basin evaluations in California. The Bulletin 118 series was preceded by Water Quality Investigations Report No. 3, *Ground Water Basins in California* (referred to in this bulletin as Report No. 3), published in 1952 by the Department of Public Works, Division of Water Resources (the predecessor of DWR). The purpose of Report No. 3 was to create a base index map of the "more important ground water basins" for carrying out DWR's mandate in Section 229 of the Water Code. Section 229 directed Public Works to:

...investigate conditions of the quality of all waters within the State, including saline waters, coastal and inland, as related to all sources of pollution of whatever nature and shall report thereon to the Legislature and to the appropriate regional water pollution control board annually, and may recommend any steps which might be taken to improve or protect the quality of such waters.

Report No. 3 identified 223 alluvium-filled valleys that were believed to be basins with usable groundwater in storage. A statewide numbering system was created in cooperation with the State Water Pollution Control Board (now the State Water Resources Control Board) based on the boundaries of the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards. In 1992, Water Code Section 229 was amended, resulting in the elimination of the annual reporting requirements.

In 1975, DWR published Bulletin 118, *California's Ground Water*, (referred to in this report as Bulletin 118-75). Bulletin 118-75 summarized available information from DWR, U.S. Geological Survey, and other agencies for individual groundwater basins to "help those who must make decisions affecting the protection, additional use, and management of the State's ground water resources."

Bulletin 118-75 contains a summary of technical information for 248 of the 461 identified groundwater basins, subbasins, and what were referred to as "areas of potential ground water storage" in California as well as maps showing their location and extent. The Bulletin 118-75 basin boundaries were based on geologic and hydrogeologic conditions except where basins were defined by a court decision.

In 1978, Section 12924 was added to the California Water Code:

The Department shall, in conjunction with other public agencies, conduct an investigation of the State's groundwater basins. The Department shall identify the State's groundwater basins on the basis of geologic and hydrogeologic conditions and consideration of political boundary lines whenever practical. The Department shall also investigate existing general patterns of groundwater pumping and groundwater recharge within such basins to the extent necessary to identify basins which are subject to critical conditions of overdraft.

DWR published the report in 1980 as *Ground Water Basins in California: A Report to the Legislature in Response to Water Code Section 12924* (referred to in this report as Bulletin 118-80). The bulletin included 36 groundwater basins with boundaries different from Bulletin 118-75. The changed boundaries resulted by combining several basins based on geologic or political considerations and by dividing the San Joaquin Valley groundwater basin into many smaller subbasins based primarily on political boundaries. These changes resulted in the identification of 447 groundwater basins, subbasins, and areas of potential groundwater storage. Bulletin 118-80 also identified 11 basins as subject to critical conditions of overdraft.

Box A Which Bulletin 118 Do You Mean?

Mention of an update to Bulletin 118 causes some confusion about which Bulletin 118 the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has updated. In addition to the statewide Bulletin 118 series (Bulletin 118-75, Bulletin 118-80, and Bulletin 118-03), DWR released several other publications in the 118 series that evaluate groundwater basins in specific areas of the State. Region-specific Bulletin 118 reports are listed below.

- Bulletin 118-1. Evaluation of Ground Water Resources: South San Francisco Bay
Appendix A. Geology, 1967
Volume 1. Fremont Study Area, 1968
Volume 2. Additional Fremont Study Area, 1973
Volume 3. Northern Santa Clara County, 1975
Volume 4. South Santa Clara County, 1981
- Bulletin 118-2. Evaluation of Ground Water Resources: Livermore and Sunol Valleys, 1974
Appendix A. Geology, 1966
- Bulletin 118-3. Evaluation of Ground Water Resources: Sacramento County, 1974
- Bulletin 118-4. Evaluation of Ground Water Resources: Sonoma County
Volume 1. Geologic and Hydrologic Data, 1975
Volume 2. Santa Rosa Plain, 1982
Volume 3. Petaluma Valley, 1982
Volume 4. Sonoma Valley, 1982
Volume 5. Alexander Valley and Healdsburg Area, 1983
- Bulletin 118-5. Bulletin planned but never completed.
- Bulletin 118-6. Evaluation of Ground Water Resources: Sacramento Valley, 1978

The Need for Bulletin 118 Update 2003

Despite California's heavy reliance on groundwater, basic information for many of the groundwater basins is lacking. Particular essential data necessary to provide for both the protection and optimal use of this resource is not available. To this end, the California Legislature mandated in the Budget Act of 1999 that DWR prepare:

...the statewide update of the inventory of groundwater basins contained in Bulletin 118-80, which includes, but is not limited to, the following: the review and summary of boundaries and hydrographic features, hydrogeologic units, yield data, water budgets, well production characteristics, and water quality and active monitoring data; development of a water budget for each groundwater basin; development of a format and procedures for publication of water budgets on the Internet; development of the model groundwater management ordinance; and development of guidelines for evaluating local groundwater management plans.

The information on groundwater basins presented in Bulletin 118 Update 2003 is mostly limited to the acquisition and compilation of existing data previously developed by federal, State, and local water agencies. While this bulletin is a good starting reference for basic data on a groundwater basin, more recent data and more information about the basin may be available in recent studies conducted by local water management agencies. Those agencies should be contacted to obtain the most recent data.

Report Organization

Bulletin 118 Update 2003 includes this report and supplemental material consisting of individual descriptions and a Geographic Information System-compatible map of each of the delineated groundwater basins in California. The basin descriptions will be updated as new information becomes available, and can be viewed or downloaded at <http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/groundwater/118index.htm> (Appendix A). Basin descriptions will not be published in hard copy.

This report is organized into the following topics:

- Groundwater is one of California's most important natural resources, and our reliance on it has continued to grow (Chapter 1).
- Groundwater has a complex legal and institutional framework in California that has shaped the groundwater management system in place today (Chapter 2).
- Groundwater management occurs primarily at the local water agency level, but may also be instituted at the local government level. At the request of the Legislature, DWR has developed some recommendations for a model groundwater management ordinance and components for inclusion in a groundwater management plan (Chapter 3).
- Groundwater has had a flurry of activity in the Legislature and at the ballot box in recent years that will affect the way groundwater is managed in California (Chapter 4).
- Groundwater programs with a variety of objectives exist in many State and federal agencies (Chapter 5).
- Groundwater concepts and definitions should be made available to a wide audience (Chapter 6).
- Groundwater basins with a wide range of characteristics and concerns exist in each of California's 10 hydrologic regions (Chapter 7).

